

Written Testimony in Support of HB 2945

To: Oregon House Joint Committee on Transportation

April 15, 2025

Darin G. Henry

Former 4J School District Employee – 25 Years of Service

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation,

I am writing today in strong support of HB 2945, which would establish the Zero Emission School Bus Fund and help school districts across Oregon transition from polluting diesel buses to clean, zero-emission electric buses.

As someone who proudly served in the 4J School District for 25 years, I've experienced firsthand the impact diesel school buses have on both people and the environment. During my time with the district, I regularly drove 14-passenger diesel vans. In the early mornings, I had to let the van idle for at least five minutes to warm up the engine enough for it to function properly. During that time, I made sure to keep the windows tightly shut because the diesel fumes were nauseating. I often thought about how much worse it must have been for the children once they were on board, breathing those same fumes day after day as some of the older vans had exhaust leaks that repairs never seemed to completely fix.

Those diesel vans also required frequent maintenance at the district's maintenance shop. Between the cost of upkeep, fuel, and the toll diesel takes on our collective health, it's clear to me that continuing to rely on diesel buses is not only unhealthy—it's expensive and unsustainable.

Investing in electric school buses is a smart financial and public health decision. Transitioning away from diesel will directly reduce medical costs related to respiratory illnesses like asthma and bronchitis, which disproportionately affect children. Petroleum fumes are also carcinogenic. It will also spare families from lost productivity and hardship caused by caring for loved ones suffering from chronic illnesses linked to air pollution.

Beyond the health implications, electric buses cost significantly less to operate and maintain over their lifetime compared to diesel vehicles. As fuel prices continue to rise and petroleum-powered buses age more quickly and require more upkeep, switching to electric is a sound investment for our state. Electric buses also avoid contributing to greenhouse gas emissions, which are driving the costly natural disasters and climate challenges we're already paying for in Oregon—through wildfires, heat waves, drought, water contamination, and more.

Moreover, the urgency to act now is real. The cost of everything—including vehicles, energy, and labor—is steadily increasing. Acting today to fund this transition will save us more in the long term than waiting until the costs rise even higher. HB 2945 is not just an environmental policy—it is a fiscally responsible, family-centered, future-forward investment in the well-being of our children, school staff, communities **and our state's economy.**

I urge you to support HB 2945 and commit to annual funding of at least \$20 million, with a priority for communities most impacted by pollution. This bill is a meaningful step toward clean air, equitable transportation, and a healthier Oregon for generations to come.

Thank you for your time and your service to our state.

Sincerely,

Darin G. Henry
Eugene, Oregon
Former 4J School District Campus Supervisor